

## NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The National Park Service was established by Congress in 1916 to conserve America's public lands and natural resources and to provide for their use by the public "so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." In the eight decades of its existence, however, the roles and responsibilities of the Park Service have expanded to include guardian of the treasures of America's cultural heritage and historic legacy; advocate for ecological balance, biodiversity, environmental science and research; world leader in the parks and preservation community; and protector of America's open space.

*"The National Park Service is dedicated to conserving unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Service is also responsible for managing a great variety of national and international programs designed to help extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world."*

Today, the National Park System includes 369 units, encompassing more than 83 million acres of land in 49 states (all except Delaware), the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands. The Service currently has under its purview about 11 percent of all public lands, with more than half located in Alaska. The diversity of the National Park System is reflected in the 22 different unit designations, including but not limited to national parks, national preserves, national historic sites, national monuments, national seashores, national recreation areas, national battlefields, and national trails.

### Weather Damage

During the year, extreme weather conditions wreaked havoc at national parks across the country. In the fall, Hurricane Opal in the Southeast and Hurricane Marilyn in the Caribbean caused an estimated \$13 million worth of damage to park resources and facilities. In January, heavy rains fell throughout the Mid-Atlantic region and New England which, coupled with the melting of several feet of snow, severely flooded a number of northeast parks. At Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, damages mounted to \$25 million, as flood waters covered 80 percent of the park and ravaged the canal, towpath, pedestrian bridges, stone retaining walls, lock gates, interpretive exhibits, historic structures and

operations facilities. The Secretary personally stepped in to amass a cadre of 5,000 volunteers and raised \$1.6 million in private sector donations and services. This, together with emergency supplemental Federal funding, enabled the C&O Canal to re-open in late spring, only to be damaged again during the fall by severe tropical storms.

### National Park Week

In April, President Clinton declared the third annual National Park Week as a celebration of the thousands of partnerships throughout the Park Service which work cooperatively and successfully with national, state, and local organizations to meet common needs and advance common goals.

Across the country, National Park Week was observed through hundreds of special in-park and community activities and distribution of a special "Our National Parks" supplement in *The New York Times Magazine*. The Washington Monument provided the perfect backdrop for the announcement by Target Stores that it was joining the Park Service as a partner in restoring the Washington Monument and would lead a \$5 million fundraising campaign.



*Statue of Liberty, New York (photo by NPS).*

### Summer Olympics

During the Summer Olympic Games, an estimated 1.5 million visitors were served by the Welcome South Visitor

Center in downtown Atlanta. A key partner in creating the one-stop visitor information facility was the Park Service's Southeast Field Area, which took the lead in design, fabrication, and operation of the public lands exhibit. Olympic visitors were able to easily get information on what to see and do at the South's many parks, forests, wildlife refuges, historic sites, lakes and seashores. The three national park sites in the Atlanta area -- Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, and Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area -- received visitors from worldwide media, several heads of state and thousands of tourists during the Atlanta games. At Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, a new 21,000 square foot visitor center complex was completed in time for Olympics visitors. The Center offers a first stop for tourists before they visit the King birth home, tomb, the King Center, Ebenezer Baptist Church, a new fire station museum, and the Sweet Auburn preservation district.

## New World Mine

In August, President Clinton announced government plans to acquire private mining claims adjacent to Yellowstone National Park to prevent damage to park resources due to a proposed mine. This was the culmination of over five years of scientific analysis and technical negotiations by Park Service resource specialists. The large New World Mine, proposed in 1990, would have been less than three miles northeast of Yellowstone and included underground mining in the park's watershed and a toxic tailings impoundment in the headwaters upstream of the park. The President, citing

### Unit Award for Excellence of Service presented to U.S. Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol Unit

*In a ceremony on October 18, Secretary Babbitt presented the Unit Award for Excellence of Service to officers of the U.S. Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol Unit for exceptional service and outstanding professionalism during the Olympic Games in Atlanta.*

*The 20-member unit consisted of officers from the National Park Service's field area offices in San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C. The members of the unit volunteered their time, from July 10 to August 6, to provide crowd control and public safety at the Centennial Olympic Park.*

*Visitation to the popular park exceeded 160,000 people daily between the Opening Ceremonies on July 19 and the Closing Ceremonies on August 4, 1996. Involvement of the U.S. Park Police had been requested by the 1996 Olympic Games Security Group to provide effective and visible patrols in and around Centennial Olympic Park. Their presence presented a friendly and popular image to the public as well as acting as a deterrent to crime.*

*When a pipe bomb exploded in Centennial Park, officers of the Mounted Patrol Unit acted swiftly in moving an estimated 60,000 people outside the park perimeter as emergency personnel attended to the injured. The officers put their lives on the line to assure the public's safety, knowing that additional explosives could detonate at any moment.*

*The entire unit worked long hours, away from their families, under chaotic and very crowded conditions. In presenting the award, Secretary Babbitt cited their outstanding teamwork, dedication to duty and expertise in crowd control. The members of the unit included:*

*Deputy Chief John D. Schamp; Lieutenant Carl E. Clipper; Sergeants Gregory N. Brown, Robin S. Heckathorn, Alexander Wynnnyk; Officers Joseph M. Agusiewicz, Jacqueline A. Anderson-Parker, David P. Cuevas, Kenneth M. Donovan, Poncho U. Gonzales, William H. Good, Jack E. Guentz, James M. Hagemann, Jeremiah E. Harrington, Daniel S. Hoehne, Ronald P. Markland, Ralph T. Pfister, Gregory J. Ryan, Clyde E. Solomon, William E. Thomas, and James A. Watson; Grooms Linda S. Garvey and Betty M. Mensch.*

the intense battle that had taken place over the proposed mine, stated that this was "for all the people of the United States, and, indeed the people of the world who love and believe in the preservation of our natural resources . . . ."

## Resource Stewardship: The Protection and Preservation of Natural and Cultural Resources

In 1996, \$73.6 million was obligated for natural resources applied research and management activities, and \$62.9 million for cultural resources preservation activities.

There are currently 34.9 million objects and approximately 21,000 linear feet of manuscript and archival documents

in over 300 parks and centers. To date, 54 percent of the objects and 34 percent of the manuscript and archival documents are cataloged and available for use; however, only 62 percent of park museum conditions adequately preserve and protect these resources. In 1996, an estimated 1.1 million objects and 650 linear feet of archives were cataloged. In addition, an estimated 423 planning, environmental, storage, security, and fire protection deficiencies were corrected in 105 parks.

Further, of the 1.5 million archeological sites thought to exist in the National Park System, less than four percent have been inventoried. In 1996, five of the 16 national park clusters completed inventory plans that report on the status of archeological inventories and set targets for conducting inventories in the future. Electronic records were aggregated for approximately 25,000 sites, with a software inventory system to be released in 1997.

## Visitor Services: Providing for Public Enjoyment

National park areas have long been favored and inexpensive destinations for millions of Americans as well as people from around the world. In 1996, there were 266 million recreational visits to America's national parks. To ensure that adequate opportunities are available for public enjoyment and that a park experience be a safe one, the Park Service provides a variety of visitor services--interpretation and education programs, information and orientation services as well as commercial concession operations. Park rangers and the U.S. Park Police work to ensure the health, safety, and security of the visiting public and staff.

- In 1996, the Park Service provided 136 million hours of interpretation and education programs systemwide. Over 130 million visitors benefited directly from these programs.
- Park rangers investigated nearly 74,000 law enforcement offenses and made 20,000 arrests. There were over 4,400 felony crimes, including 15 murders and 158 aggravated assaults. U.S. Park Police investigated over 11,000 criminal acts, arrested 3,500 persons for crimes committed on park lands and adjacent areas and captured 281 fugitives and wanted persons.
- In 1996, nearly 4,000 search and rescue missions were conducted in our national parks, that included locating and assisting individuals lost or trapped in confined



*Guiding park visitors (photo by NPS).*

spaces. Rangers and emergency medical personnel also responded to nearly 25,000 incidents.

- The U.S. Park Police also contribute to the nationwide drug enforcement effort, engaging in surveillance activities, undercover operations, as well as drug awareness and education efforts. Patrol levels in areas with a high incidence of drug related illegal activity were stepped-up in 1996; there were 2,700 reported drug incidents in U.S. Park Police jurisdictions.

## Concessionaires

Currently there are 665 concessionaires operating in 133 parks in the National Park System. They provide a variety of services for park visitors, including accommodations and facilities. Concessionaires have contributed approximately \$16 million in franchise fees to the general fund of the U.S. Treasury, and deposited over \$24 million in special improvement accounts. These accounts provide for new and rehabilitated visitor and support centers. The net average return to the government as a percent of gross concession revenue has been increasing in recent years, and is currently about six percent. Concessionaires have also made improvements in concession fixed assets in excess of \$25 million in recent years.

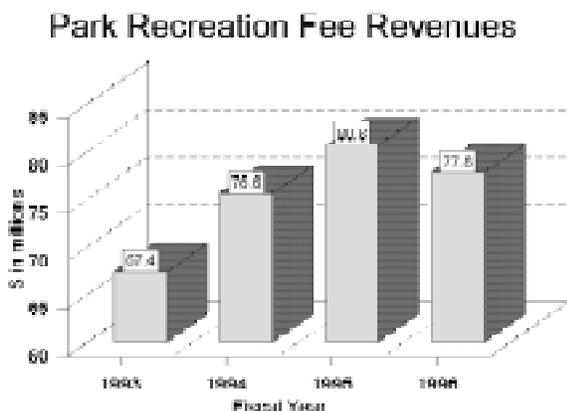
Each year over 4,500 individual inspections are conducted to evaluate operations to ensure that park visitors are provided safe, sanitary, attractive, and high quality services. In 1995, approximately 99 percent of the concessionaires received a satisfactory operational rating, and steps were taken to correct reported deficiencies.

## Recreation Fee Revenues

About one-half of the national park units collect either an entrance fee and/or recreational user fees. In 1996, fee revenues totaled \$77.8 million, a decrease of \$2.8 million or 3.5 percent from 1995. About one-half of the fee-collecting parks posted a decrease in receipts for the year. A survey of park fee managers revealed that the primary factors that caused the drop in fee revenues in 1996 was the government shutdown and inclement weather.

The Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 contained language establishing a Recreation Fee Demonstration Program that allows the Park Service to collect a demonstration fee at up to 100 sites. The additional revenue collected at those sites above an annually adjusted target based on 1995 fee receipts will be available to the Park Service without being subject to appropriation. Figure 6 shows the amount of recreation fee revenues collected by the Park Service for 1993 through 1996.

Figure 6



### Another “Six-Pack”

*As the brown Dodge pickup sped back onto Interstate 5 and headed for Las Vegas, Eric Inman could see that the truck no longer carried the 55-gallon drums it had hauled into the Mojave Desert. Another “six-pack” of hazardous waste had been illegally dumped on land managed by the Department of the Interior.*

*The suspects tried to elude Inman, a criminal investigator for the National Park Service, by fleeing at high speed and making U-turns across the highway median. Maintaining radio contact with his surveillance team, Inman caught up with the vehicle and pulled it over. Alan Foster, the lead investigator on the case, and Bert Tappia, a Bureau of Land Management special agent, were quickly on the scene. Facing armed officers, the suspects did not resist, but a loaded rifle was found in the truck.*

*Also assisting in the investigation, arrest and interrogation were other National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management Rangers, along with the San Bernadino County Sheriff’s Department, California State Game Warden, the FBI and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The August arrest ended months of investigation and three weeks of surveillance by the multi-agency team. The company had dumped 108 drums of extremely hazardous material at a dozen Mojave sites on BLM, Park Service, and private lands.*

*Dropped in clusters, the barrels contained mercury, corrosive fluids, and plastic compounds with low flash points. “It was nasty stuff—carcinogenic, volatile, heat and shock sensitive,” Foster explained. Some of the drums had already begun to leak, killing desert wildlife and vegetation.*

*When investigators searched the company’s warehouse, they found a hundred additional drums of waste ready to be dumped. Based on the team’s work, the owner of the firm and the driver were indicted on 21 felony charges. The U.S. Attorney for Los Angeles called it one of the largest environmental crimes of its kind, and said that the textbook inter-agency collaboration produced one of the most thorough investigative packages he has seen.*

## Partnerships and External Programs: Leading National Conservation Initiatives

Partnership activities help the Park Service fulfill its mission to extend the benefits of cultural and natural conservation throughout the country.

In 1996, the Park Service’s historic preservation partnerships with Indian Tribes and the Heritage Partnerships showed how important partnerships are to the fulfillment of the Park Service mission.

- National Historic Preservation partnerships entered a new era when 14 Indian Tribes assumed national program responsibilities for historical preservation on tribal lands. This expanded partnership responds to the 1992 Amendments to the National Historic Pres-



*Grand Teton (photo by C.W. Stoughton).*

ervation Act that recognized the tribes' growing capabilities in historic preservation and the tribes' rightful place in the national program.

- Heritage Partnerships are a new emphasis and help communities find appropriate ways to conserve and promote distinctive landscapes that reflect their regional heritage. In 1996, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program was engaged in 20 projects in which communities were seeking ways to benefit from and protect their heritage resources. A defining aspect of the partnership approach is that new Federal land ownership or management is not involved; areas are managed by local organizations and the Federal role is limited to technical assistance, promotion, and coordination.

## Customer Service

Long before Vice President Gore's National Performance Review (NPR) call to "put customers first," the Park Service worked to assess and provide for the needs of its primary customer, the park visitor. Since 1982, the

Visitor Services Project has pioneered a systematic means of surveying visitors to national parks. More than 80 studies have been conducted, from Death Valley National Monument to Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Washington, D.C., and were featured in the NPR reports on reinventing government.

In September, the Park Service issued *Serving the Visitor 1996*, the third annual report card which compares the results of visitor surveys taken in more than 50 parks since 1988. Over 80 percent of visitors rated three significant areas--the quality of park personnel, the quality of visitor centers, and the quality of ranger programs--as "very good" or "good". To help meet requirements under the Government Performance and Results Act, a new question was added to the survey this year which asked visitors to rate the overall quality of services in the park. In response to this question, 90 percent of the visitors in the parks studied rated the overall quality of visitor services as "good" or "very good".

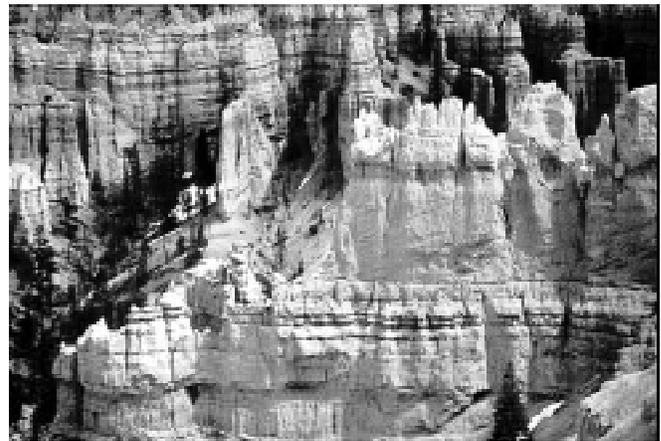
Also, in 1996, the Park Service continued in its second year of developing customer service standards. A set of

“Principles of Customer Service” was developed aimed at ensuring the quality of customer service to our visitors. These principles state that employees will: (1) be courteous, helpful and responsive; (2) make available quality maps and brochures; (3) provide quality audio-visual programs and exhibits; (4) provide quality services in visitor centers. Over the next year, visitors will be evaluating the Park Service on these principles and a report will be completed by mid-September 1997 tabulating the results.

In recognition of the Park Service’s innovative efforts at assessing customer satisfaction and improving customer service, in 1996, the Park Service received Vice President Gore’s NPR “Hammer Award.” This distinguished award is given to select Federal agencies that demonstrate extraordinary efforts of implementing the goals of the NPR and who make significant contributions in support of President Clinton’s NPR principles of putting customers first, cutting red tape, empowering employees and getting back to basics.

### **Status of the Government Performance and Results Act Implementation**

The Park Service is continuing its efforts to implement the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) so that by 1999, performance data measurements will be integrated with its budget submission. The Park Service has developed long term goals and annual performance measures which have been released for public comment in the form of a draft GPRA Strategic Plan. As articulated in the draft Strategic Plan, the mission goals of the Park Service fall into four primary categories:



*Bryce Canyon (photo by M. Farrell)*

- Preserve park resources;
- Provide for the public enjoyment and visitor experience of parks;
- Perpetuate heritage resources and enhance recreational opportunities managed by partners; and
- Ensure organizational effectiveness.

As these goals and performance measures are refined, the Park Service will work to ensure that the Strategic Plan is implemented uniformly throughout the Park System. As the Park Service moves forward with ongoing work on the development of baseline data and performance measures, this information will be incorporated into future Accountability Reports.